WHAT WE BELIEVE

The National Federation of the Blind (NFB) knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back.

WHO WE ARE

The National Federation of the Blind, headquartered in Baltimore, defends the rights of blind people of all ages and provides information and support to families with blind children, older Americans who are losing vision, and more. Founded in 1940, the NFB is the transformative membership and advocacy organization of blind Americans with affiliates, chapters, and divisions in the fifty states, Washington DC, and Puerto Rico. We believe in the hopes and dreams of blind people and work together to transform them into reality.
Dear Friends:

In the National Federation of the Blind, as in life, each year presents its own challenges. The year 2020, however, presented an unanticipated one for our movement, as it did for our nation and the world. For a grassroots movement in which blind people meet regularly at the local and state level, the COVID-19 pandemic meant fundamentally altering the ways in which we conduct business. Furthermore, lockdowns started to occur just as we were ramping up for our annual national convention and our summer Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Academy programs for blind children. Finally, the pandemic itself presented special challenges for blind people, some of which threatened our safety and health.

How could we keep track of the latest pandemic information, which was often presented on websites with inaccessible graphics? How would blind students fare in an online-only educational environment, given the inaccessibility of many virtual learning platforms? What about drive-through-only testing sites, banking, and food service? In addition, how would blind people vote safely in the 2020 election when most states were closing in-person polling places where we use accessible voting machines?

We, as a movement of blind people, understood that the most effective counteraction to the barriers presented by the pandemic would be concentrated advocacy, programs, and resources led by the blind themselves. So in the months leading up to and following our convention, we tackled all these challenges and then some. We expanded our groundbreaking NFB-NEWSLINE® service, allowing blind people in all fifty states, DC, and Puerto Rico to access current outbreak statistics and breaking news articles about the pandemic, regardless of whether NFB-NEWSLINE was sponsored in their area. Our affiliates also developed and distributed their own collections of resources to every blind person they could find, as well as directly assisting some of them with critical needs through, among other things, finding volunteers to drive them to medical appointments or to deliver groceries or prescriptions. Our nationwide network was never more critical to meeting the needs of blind people, especially those who were vulnerable due to age, underlying health conditions, or physical isolation exacerbated by the limited availability of public transportation and ride-sharing options during the crisis. We fought alongside college-bound
blind students who were denied hardcopy Braille and tactile graphics for Advanced Placement examinations and secured their right to have those accommodations. We quickly created NFB BELL In-home edition, using video lessons and materials shipped directly to the homes of families with blind children to provide the Braille and blindness-skills training that we could no longer give these children in person. (We adopted this same model for our 2020 NFB STEM2U program.) We worked in seventeen states to make sure that blind voters had access to accessible methods for filling out and returning absentee or mail-in ballots. And despite the short time we had between the onset of the pandemic and our scheduled annual convention, we conducted an extraordinarily large and successful virtual convention, in which over ten thousand individuals participated over the course of five days in early July.

We could only accomplish all of this, and much more, with the continued support of all of you: our donors, partners, and volunteers. You came through for blind Americans when we needed you most, even while facing your own pandemic-related challenges. You put forward your time, your talent, and your treasure to make sure that blind people’s lives and rights were secure throughout the darkest days of a traumatic year. I cannot adequately express how much this meant to blind people and to the National Federation of the Blind. Thank you for loving us all through an extraordinarily difficult passage in our collective journey.

Sincerely,

Mark Riccobono, President
National Federation of the Blind
THE 2020 NATIONAL CONVENTION

Each year, the national convention of the National Federation of the Blind is the largest gathering of blind people held anywhere in the world, with participation typically ranging from 2,500 to 3,000 people and sometimes more. While the coronavirus pandemic meant that we could not gather in person for the 2020 National Convention, it gave us the opportunity to expand the circle of participation to create the largest gathering of the blind in history. We expanded our capacity to host videoconferences, complete with closed captioning and Spanish interpretation, and worked with Crowd Compass to create a dedicated smart phone app so that attendees could easily find and join any of the dozens of division and committee meetings, affiliate caucuses, virtual exhibits, and more throughout the five-day event. The virtual nature of the convention allowed us to bring in participants from all over the country who could perhaps not otherwise have attended, including United States House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Netflix Chief Product Officer Greg Peters, blind sculptor Michael Naranjo, and many more. Over ten thousand individuals from the United States and all over the world participated in all or part of the convention. Some Federationists gathered in small in-person events, especially “banquet parties,” where they dined together while listening to the usual convention banquet awards presentations and the annual address given by NFB President Mark Riccobono. Members voted by telephone and text message, so that the convention was able to conduct all of its usual business as the supreme governing authority of the movement. All of this was possible thanks to our convention sponsors and supporters like you, and the experience has prepared us to hold another successful virtual convention in 2021. That said, we are all looking forward to being back together again for the 2022 National Convention in New Orleans!

BUILDING, LEARNING, AND EXPLORING

NFB BELL ACADEMY®

The NFB Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning (BELL) Academy provides blind children with instruction in Braille, cane travel, and the other nonvisual skills they will need to achieve their dreams and live the lives they want. The coronavirus pandemic presented a challenge in 2020 because it prevented our regular BELL summer day-camp programs across the nation from going forward, but we rapidly created NFB BELL In-Home Edition, and 265 students from fifty states, DC and Puerto Rico participated in the virtual program through video lessons, materials shipped directly to their homes, and guided activities that the children could do with their parents.
NFB BELL Academy has helped me achieve goals in Braille and discover new things about myself, I didn’t even realize. And make new, great friends.

EARLY CHILDHOOD INITIATIVES

The early childhood initiatives of the National Federation of the Blind provide young blind children and their families with support and guidance to master the fundamental skills of literacy and independent travel. The Braille Reading Pals Club introduces young blind children and their families to literacy through Braille. The program fosters positive attitudes about Braille and helps sighted family members promote a love of reading through the shared reading of print/Braille books with their blind children. The Early Explorers program introduces young blind children and their families to the long white cane so that the children will become more independent, confident, and curious travelers throughout life.
NFB STEM2U

Far too often, blind youth are denied the opportunity to explore science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) subjects because it is assumed that sight is required to succeed in these disciplines. Unfortunately, many teachers, parents, and students are unaware of the nonvisual solutions, many of which have been created by blind scientists and engineers, that enable blind people to engage in STEM education and careers. Due to this lack of knowledge and the resulting low expectations, blind students are discouraged from pursuing an exciting area of potential interest, exploring employment in lucrative STEM careers, and participating in the development of ideas and innovations that will change the world.

For over fifteen years, the National Federation of the Blind has pioneered programs to increase the participation of blind youth in STEM fields. In 2020, to keep students safe during the COVID-19 pandemic, we brought our STEM2U program to participants in a literal sense, using video lessons in conjunction with materials sent to the students' homes.

I enjoyed hearing from blind professionals. NFB has given me the opportunity to know that there are successful blind adults who are doing what they want to do and living an independent life. NFB challenges me to have high expectations of myself.

– NFB STEM student

SECURING INDEPENDENCE & INFORMATION

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND FREE WHITE CANE PROGRAM

The National Federation of the Blind believes that the long white cane is a means to independence for the blind. The white cane has proved a useful tool to millions of blind people in navigating their environments with confidence and safety. It is a tool that allows blind people to travel where and when they want and, as such, promotes independence and self-sufficiency. Each year, we celebrate White Cane Awareness Day to increase public awareness and understanding of the positive effect this simple tool has on the lives of blind people.

We believe that independence and freedom to travel are so critical to the quality of life of blind people that every blind person should have a cane, regardless of ability to pay. That is why the National Federation of the Blind offers free fiberglass canes to blind users through its Free White Cane Program. Since we began the program over a decade ago, nearly seventy thousand free white canes have been distributed.
NFB-NEWSLINE®

- 124,813 subscribers served by telephone, mobile access points, and internet
- A distinct log in to NFB-NEWSLINE every 16.7 seconds
- Up-to-date accessible information on the coronavirus every day

Adults who are losing vision often tell us that the first thing they miss when reading becomes difficult is perusing the newspaper each day. To support them, and to allow all blind and low-vision people to be well-informed citizens, we created NFB-NEWSLINE. This unique, free-to-users service provides access to over five hundred national and international daily newspapers, magazines, and online news sources.

“Please know that I simply could not live very well at this time in our nation’s history, without this complement to my daily life. – NFB-NEWSLINE subscriber

The service can be accessed via touchtone telephone, computer, mobile app and with smart speakers that use Amazon Alexa. To learn more about the service, visit nfbnewslioneonline.org.
PROTECTING VOTING RIGHTS

While federal law requires that every polling place have at least one voting machine that blind people can use privately and independently, many states do not have a system that allows blind absentee voters to exercise the same right. This problem became particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic, as states expanded absentee voting and voting by mail. The National Federation of the Blind worked hard in seventeen states to ensure that blind voters could safely vote from home without risking exposure to the virus, securing this right in most of them.

“I was over forty years old before I had the right to a secret ballot. I do not cry easily, but I cried when I first exercised this right most people take for granted. I am grateful that NFB is advocating too protect my right to vote privately and independently during the pandemic.” – Federation member

RECOGNIZING INNOVATION AND EXCELLENCE

DR. JACOB BOLOTON AWARDS

Dr. Jacob Bolotin (1888-1924) was the first physician in history who was born blind. His passion and tireless advocacy for the rights and independence of blind people helped to change entrenched but incorrect attitudes toward blindness. Each year, the National Federation of the Blind awards individuals, initiatives, and innovations that are a positive force in the lives of blind people with a monetary award in his name. Winners of the prestigious award continue Dr. Bolotin’s legacy by breaking down barriers, changing negative perceptions of blindness, and inspiring blind people to achieve new heights. In 2020, $25,000 each was presented to an acting academy for blind performers and an educational program that is pioneering accessible technology for blind astronomers.

You can learn more about the awards and past recipients at nfb.org/Bolotin.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Our annual scholarship program is the largest of its kind in the nation. Every year, we award more than $120,000 to blind scholars across the fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in recognition of their achievements and professional aspirations. In 2020, these thirty outstanding scholars were recognized.

DISTINGUISHED EDUCATOR OF BLIND STUDENTS AWARD

Every year, the Distinguished Educator of Blind Students Award recognizes an outstanding teacher of blind students. The 2020 recipient was Graciela L. Olivo of Brownsville, Texas.
HOW YOU CAN HELP

We could not do this critical work without our many generous supporters. We are grateful for the contributions of our 2020 donors. Here are some ways that you can help us continue to help blind people live the lives they want:

DONATE ONLINE
Contributions by credit card may be given at one time or pledged over a period of time. A one-time credit card donation can be made online at nfb.org/donate. To make a recurring donation, please call our accounting department at 410-659-9314, extension 2213.

DONATE BY MAIL
Checks should be made out to the “National Federation of the Blind” and mailed to the National Federation of the Blind, attention Outreach, at 200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place, Baltimore, MD 21230.

DONATE A VEHICLE
You can donate a vehicle to the National Federation of the Blind by calling 855-659-9314 or by visiting nfb.org/vehicledonations.

DONATE CLOTHING
If you live in Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, or Virginia, you can donate clothing and other household items to the NFB. You may take your items to a GreenDrop collection site or call 888-610-4632 for home pickup. Learn more by visiting nfbpickup.org.

PLANNED GIVING
Including the National Federation of the Blind in your estate plans is a thoughtful way to transform dreams into reality for the next generation. Learn more at nfb.org/planned-giving.

The Dream Makers Circle honors friends of the National Federation of the Blind who are helping build a successful future through their commitment of a legacy gift to the organization.
FINANCIAL STATEMENT

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES
Year Ended December 31, 2020

REVENUE AND GAINS AND OTHER SUPPORT

Public Support
  Contributions $15,278,627
  Donated Services 6,909,022
  Government Grants and Contracted Services 3,044,484

Total Public Support 25,232,133

Revenue
  Sales - Independence Products and Publications 288,193
  Net Investment Income (loss) 3,234,951

Total Revenue 3,523,144

Total Revenue and Gains and Other Support $28,755,277

EXPENSES

Program Services
  Blindness Integration $11,577,929
  Civil Rights, Advocacy, and Self-Organization 6,907,703
  Nonvisual Access Technology, Methods and Systems 5,559,321

Total Program Services 24,044,953

Supporting Services
  Management and General 627,787
  Fundraising 1,292,580

Total Supporting Services 1,920,367

Total Expenses $25,965,320

Changes in Net Assets $2,789,957
Net Assets - Beginning of Year $29,120,223
Net Assets - End of Year $31,910,180
The National Federation of the Blind meets the rigorous Standards for Charity Accountability set forth by the BBB Wise Giving Alliance. The NFB maintains a GuideStar Exchange Gold Participant status and is an approved charity participant in the Combined Federal Campaign.

MANAGEMENT & GENERAL AND FUNDRAISING EXPENSES AS A PERCENT OF TOTAL PUBLIC SUPPORT

Financial statements presented have been audited by Rosen, Sapperstein and Friedlander, LLC. Complete audited statements with accompanying notes for the National Federation of the Blind can be obtained at [https://nfb.org/about-us/annual-report-and-financials](https://nfb.org/about-us/annual-report-and-financials) or by contacting the offices of the National Federation of the Blind, 200 East Wells Street at Jernigan Place, Baltimore, Maryland 21230, 410-659-9314.

The National Federation of the Blind, a tax-exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, is eligible to receive contributions that are deductible for computing income and estate taxes. Donors should consult their attorney or financial advisor to discuss the tax implications of any donation they make or contemplate making to the National Federation of the Blind.